Public Comments
Glyphosate NSRL
OEHHA

https://oehha.ca.gov/comments

State of California
Sacramento, California
June 21, 2017

Dear Members of the Commission,

First, I would like to acknowledge the commission's willingness to involve the public in the process of setting NSRL levels for glyphosate, including the public hearing which you held in Sacramento as well as your extension of the comment period, which enables my own submission at this moment.

I am not a scientist, but I have been involved in public policy debates in Cleveland, Ohio and the nation since 1967. I have held public office at many levels, including City Councilman, Clerk of Courts, Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio State Senator and Member of the United States Congress, during which time I served a term as chairman of a congressional investigative subcommittee with oversight of domestic policy. I am quite familiar with the workings of government, as well as the responsibility of regulatory agencies.

In 1999, I became aware of a Cornell University study through an National Public Radio (NPR) report which claimed that the larvae of Monarch butterflies had experienced injury and even death when exposed to pollen from genetically engineered, Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis), corn dusted on milkweed leaves in a laboratory test.

That report sparked my interest given the ecological primacy of Monarch butterflies. I was further concerned when I learned the mechanism of affect involved a toxin in the genetically-engineered pollen, which, when it traveled to the gut of the butterfly, so disturbed the insect's microbiome that it released into the body of the butterfly otherwise arrested pathogens in the gut adverse to the insect's immune system, creating great vulnerability and harm.

My immediate concern was if such a product, or by-product of genetic engineering could produce harm in one species, what of other species, including humans?

I soon brought to congress legislation to label genetically engineered products and to safety-test such products for allergenicity, toxicity, anti-biotic resistance and functional characteristics.

As I began my inquiry into GMOs, I learned that in the closing days of the

Administration of the first President Bush, the FDA, without providing any public evidence to support its position, determined that GMO products were "the functional equivalent" of conventional food.

I also witnessed Monsanto conduct an extraordinary lobbying effort to thwart any consideration of my legislation, even at the committee level.

Additionally, Monsanto brought forth a multi-million dollar national public advertising campaign in support of genetically modified food as being the solution to world hunger. And, at that point Monsanto accelerated their political contributions to key members of Congress.

As national labeling and safety-testing legislation was throttled in Washington, citizens moved to state-initiative processes to attempt to rescue consumers' right to know. Again, in state after state, Monsanto and their supporters poured millions of dollars to defeat state labeling initiatives.

In the past year, fearing a breakthrough of citizen demands for transparency at a state level, Monsanto was successful in engineering a law through Congress which purported to provide labeling standards for GMO products, but was actually a naked attempt at using pre-emption to defeat the national public will for labeling.

At this very moment the rule-making apparatus for implementing the mischaracterized federal labeling regime is stalled, but it has already served its purpose: To derail at the state level what the federal government had no intention to deliver at the national level.

Monsanto and their business allies and partners have been successful in sabotaging legislation, state initiatives and honest consideration of science at an agency level. They have totally corrupted the political and the integrity of scientific deliberation by secretly funding studies and purchasing the imprimatur of previously independent university departments.

I offer these observations from the vantage point of someone who has been well positioned inside a political system which is called upon to protect consumers health from unsafe products. I am fully aware of the gravity of the decision which the commission must make with respect to the NSRL concerning glyphosate, which, when I first began the debate in congress over GMOs was not well understood as to its presence or impact.

It occurs, upon rational and conscientious consideration that the establishment of a NSRL level of 1100 micrograms per kilogram of body weight is inconsistent with sound regulatory practice, in that it does not look at all animal studies which question whether any level of exposure to glyphosate and its surfactants is safe. Nor are their epidemiological or longitudinal studies which demonstrate the real life human health effects of exposure.

At this point, a safe harbor for Monsanto is not a safe harbor for consumers in that there is no evidence that the basis for the NSRL has been adequately researched to determine that it is, in fact, safe. The term "safe harbor," when it comes to glyphosate, is an oxymoron at best, and at worst a marketing canard inviting human health hazards.

Consumers are currently not properly warned as to the consequences of glyphosate ingestion. The public must be warned if exposure levels below a certain threshold may, nevertheless, cause harm, proximately or through bio-accumulation. One of the many reasons why people reject GMO food products is that there is legitimate concern about unsafe levels of chemicals in their food.

I would humbly ask the commission to set aside the NSRL process with respect to glyphosate, and, respecting the precautionary principle, to suspend the sale of all glyphosate-contaminated food products until such time that truly independent tests can property assess the human health of glyphosate and its surfactants.

Thank you for your careful consideration of my appeal.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress
(1997-2013)
contactkucinich@gmail.com